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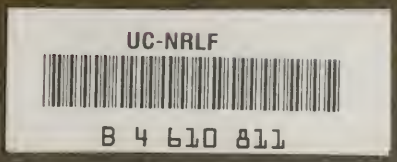

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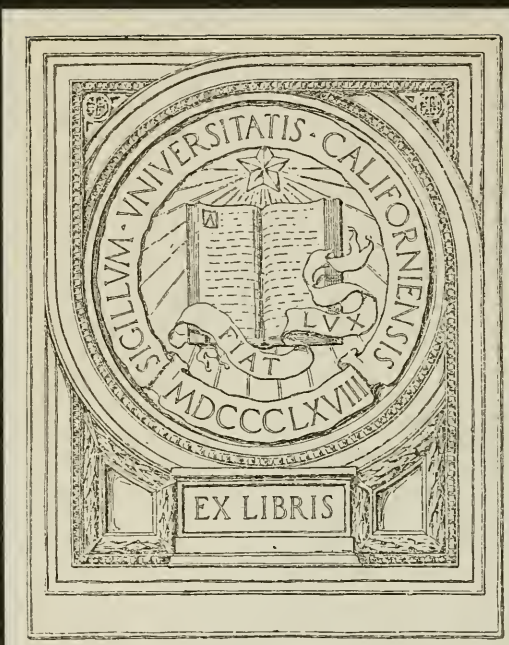
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When Good Men Meet As Foe to Foe

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When Good Men Meet As Foe to Foe

by Minnie L. Gloud

WRITTEN IN GERMANY

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Germany, England, Russia, and France,—
As students in their schools, perchance,
We have these distant countries seen.
As strollers through their byways green
We've learned to like their mountains tall,
Their lakes and cities and peoples all;
And when we like them all so well,
More sincerely than we can tell,
We find it hard to understand
Why the one should hate the other land.

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THE WAR DECLARATION

Franziska is playing at dolls
In her home in Munich town;
She hears in the street below
A rat-a-tat up and down.

From the open window she sees
A soldier in blue and red,
With a drum before him hung
And a helmet on his head.

She runs to her mother and cries,
"Oh, mother, quickly come,
There's a crowd of men outside
And a soldier with a drum."

The face of the mother turns pale;
She takes her child by the hand;
They go the stairway down
To where the people stand.

The soldier ceases to drum,
The men are still as the dead,
While, by the *Kommissar,*
The war declaration is read.

"Dear mother, what does it mean,
And why do you hide your eyes?"
"Come play with your blocks and dolls,"
The weeping mother replies.

August 1, 1914.

IN MUNICH, AUGUST, 1914

I stood with the people in the street,
As the war declaration was read,
And saw the faces of mothers and wives
Grow deathly pale with pain and dread.

I saw the public automobiles
All filled with soldiers riding free
To their affairs, or taking once more
A pleasure drive, as it might be.

I saw the handkerchiefs wildly waved,
And children hang over balcony bars,
And girls and gray-haired men bring out
Bouquets and boxes of cigars.

I saw the guards by the station gates,
And heard the wistful farewell cheers
Of the departing soldier boys,
The while my eyes ran over with tears.

I thought of all the good and brave
Who must perish in the fearful game,
And my soul cried out in agony,
Oh, who — who — who is to blame!

FROM A BAVARIAN CONVENT

Green grows the grass on the Traunstein hills,
The cool winds breathe through the fir trees tall,
While August's sun gilds the convent roof,
And peaches redden on its wall.

Below, in the vale, by the bridge of stone,
Where the railway line goes over the Traun,
Flash bayonets in the blue white light,
As the kingdom's guards walk up and down.

From Rosenheim comes the Salzburg train.
It threads the lovely landscape through,
When near the town, with wonted larum,
Our rural calm it breaks anew.

And now another sound is heard,
More fearsome than the whistle keen,
As Tyrol's mustering soldier boys
Far out from the wagon windows lean.

With shining needles shaping socks,
In the convent garden the sisters sit;
Their brothers are they know not where,—
With anguished hearts they pray as they knit.

August, 1914.

THE MUSTERING OF THE HORSES

Through spruces and firs, and grass and grain,
By the mountain road and the river way,
The loyal Bavarian peasants lead
Their horses into the town to-day.

The four to ten years old they bring,
In response to the startled country's call;
The tall and strong and handsomest,—
Four hundred horses there are in all.

The peasants say, "Our boys have gone,
And now our horses too must go —
My Schwalbe and my Fuchs, good-by!
Good-by my Rapp, good-by Rassco!"

TRAUNSTEIN, August 5, 1914.

THE WEDDING RING

Wee Willy kissed his mother's hand,
As children do in the German land.
"Dear mother, where is your ring of gold?"
He asked, "And why is your hand so cold?"

The mother took her boy on her knee,
Her face was sad as sad could be,
"My child," she said, "you innocent thing,
For our country's need I have given my ring."

"But, mother, what will father say,
Now you have given your ring away?
I truly think that coin instead
Would have been better," Willy said.

The mother stroked the golden hair,
And looked in those eyes of beauty rare.
"Your father must go to the war," she said,
"And we shall need that coin for bread."

THE LIST OF THE DEAD

'Twas a sunny day, a month ago,
That the regiment marched away;
And all about the town there waved
Long flags and garlands gay.

Do you remember how Hans looked?
'Twas only a month ago —
He wore a helmet and a sword —
Hans was my brother, you know.

I thought it fine a soldier to be;
I wished I too were a boy.
I thought to march away to the war
Would give me boundless joy.

Hans laughed aloud when I said it.
'Twas only a month ago,—
He tossed me aloft in his arms —
Hans was my brother, you know.

He said, "You are a golden child,"
And patted me on the head.
And now — I'll never see him again —
Hans's name's in the List of the Dead.

MID - SEPTEMBER

We hear no more that farewell cry
From military trains.
The little mountain town lies still
Beneath the autumn rains.

Unwatched is now the bridge of stone;
No guard now stands before
The red brick railway station gates;
Of spies one speaks no more.

The farmwife brings the milk to town,
The baker kneads the dough,
Potatoes, beef, and beer are sold,
To school the children go.

But in the shops the old and lame
Must serve as best they may;
No patrons to the drapers come —
They cannot sell, they say.

The "English Spoken," printed large
On the hotel terrace screen,
Since August blotted out has been,
And painted over green.

The bookman's window glass is hung
With picture postal cards
Of princes, kings, and generals,
And field-gray coated guards.

The war news telegrams are nailed
To walls or trunks of trees,
That rich and poor alike may read
Indifferent to fees.

On the church door, framed in oak and crêpe
And Bavaria's blue and white,
Stands the name and age of the townsman brave,
Last fallen in the fight.

His photograph in uniform
Is above the wreath of oak.
He lightly smiles, as though to be
A soldier were a joke.

And we who see that smile must turn
In agony away,
Imagining that boy as on
The battlefield he lay.

TRAUNSTEIN, 1914.

THE FIRST WOUNDED

In the warmth of early afternoon,
  Before the station gates,
The coming of the Munich train
  A crowd expectant waits.

I wonder, as the train draws in,
  How the people will behave
At sight of the soldier invalids,
  The first of their wounded brave.

At the wagon windows stand the men,
  A score or more perhaps,
All in brass-buttoned uniforms
  And jaunty little caps.

The Red Cross workers help them down —
  They take them by the hand,
And lead them tenderly to where
  The automobiles stand.

The people gaze with spell-bound eyes
  And not a word to say —
It is as still as in the church
  On a holy Sabbath day.

The automobiles soon are filled
With three soldiers on a seat,
And the doctors tuck the blankets in
About their patients' feet.

The people do not wave and cheer —
They are too dazed to weep.
I feel the deep significance
Of the silence that they keep.

A score of slightly wounded men
Have made all understand,
As they have not before conceived,
That war is in the land.

TRAUNSTEIN, September 25, 1914.

THE COMING OF THE PRISONERS

Though hills and valleys still are green,
With snow the Alps are white.
At set of sun their rosy peaks
The children's eyes delight.

But on their loveliness to-night
The children think no more,
While in a serried crowd they wait
The old salt works before.

Tiptoeing high, agog they gaze,
As curious children do.
"They come!" one cries, as round the bend
A train swings into view.

Adown the rusty railway lines,
Unused for many a day,
To where the expectant crowd begins
It slowly makes its way.

Anon it halts, and soon we see
A row of bayonets
Flare in the glory from the sky
Where the sun in splendor sets.

The murmur of the crowd is hushed,
We hear the stern command,
"Fall back! Fall back!" The train moves on,
And comes again to stand.

The passengers to earth get down,
A motley company,
French, English, Russian, Servian —
Two hundred there may be.

Old men and young with downcast eyes,
Or straight-out glances bold,
And with them boys that seem not more
Than ten or twelve years old.

And some are trimly, finely dressed,
And carry tourist bags,
While others, who no luggage have,
Wear rough clothes worn to rags.

Into the old salt works they go,
These prisoners of war.
'Tis strange to think that all alike
Must sleep on sacks of straw.

'Tis sad to think that women too,
And children not half grown,
Are taken from their homes to be
Into such prisons thrown.

And stranger, sadder still to know
That to sleep on sacks of straw
Is but a trifling incident
In this revolting war.

TRAUNSTEIN, September 25, 1914.

MID - OCTOBER

FROM THE WARTBERGHOHE

With golden beeches and purple oaks
The vale below is decked.
The Sontagshorn and Reifelberg
With early snows are flecked.

The calm of Nature's harvest-time
Lies on the Traunstein farms.
My spirit too would quiet find,
And rest from its alarms.

But how can I the scene enjoy
While war is in the land,
And a hospital and prison are
In view on either hand?

The hospital is fair to see
As it rises from the hill;
But day by day the wounded come,
Its snow-white beds to fill.

One must in agony recoil
At the tales of war they tell,
And weep to know they must go back
As soon as they are well.

In the shabby suburb, called the Au,
In the middle of the vale,
I see the ugly chimney tall
Of a temporary jail.

Young men from universities,
Old men with whitened hair,
Professionals, and laborers,
And little boys are there.

Ten thousand hands are reached to help
The wounded on the hill;
But who war prisoners to help
Has courage, heart, and will?

To a wandering American
The rulers it allow.
Down from the Wartberg height I go
To the prisoners in the Au.

TRAUNSTEIN, 1914.

LOVE TRIUMPHANT

I went to-day to the Traunstein shops,
To buy my boy war prisoners tops.
As I entered the toy-shop in the square,
The girl who served was in a flare.
She said, "From morn till evening late —
From first to last our foes I hate."
"I'd like to see some tops," I said.
Surprised she quickly turned her head.
"'Tis early Christmas gifts to buy."
She took a box from a shelf on high.
"I buy for prisoners in the Au.
To me the war rules this allow,"
I answered, not at all afraid,
As she three tops on the counter laid.
"But are there boys in the prison, then?"
"Oh, yes," I answered, "there are ten —
One little Pole and several French."
She groped a moment under a bench,
Then handed me two games for boys.
"The older boys won't care for toys,"
She said. "Don't tell it, if you please,
But I should like to send them these."

October 17, 1914.

NIGHTS WHEN I CANNOT SLEEP

I smell the pears that grow on the wall,
And the fragrance from the balsams tall.
It is so still in the villa old
That I hear the floors contract in the cold.
The bright stars through my windows peep,
These autumn nights when I cannot sleep.

Or the wind blows up and the curtain flaps,
While a pear tree branch on my window raps.
The frozen rain tumultuous falls,
From north and west the thunder calls,
The lightning glares in the darkness deep,
These autumn nights when I cannot sleep.

I think of prisoners of war,
Awake on their huddled sacks of straw,
Of wounded men, as in pain they rave,
Of boys already in the grave;
My eyes are dry though I fain would weep,
These autumn nights when I cannot sleep.

I think of soldiers out in the field,
Who must at dawn their strong lives yield,
The sons, and brothers, and husbands good
Of Europe's sorrowing womanhood.
With me wan faces vigil keep,
These autumn nights when I cannot sleep.

I think and think, while my pulses pound,
Till I hear below a familiar sound,
And the reckless pace of my pulses wild
Is soothed by the cry of a little child,
And tears from under my eyelids creep,
These autumn nights when I cannot sleep.

Villa Sankt Josef, Traunstein, October, 1914.

THE MUSIC PLAYED ALONE

Like splendid pictures in gold frames,
At breaking of the day,
Three months ago the soldiers marched
To the battle front away.

And week by week, with aspect bright,
More soldiers — more and more —
Have singing crossed the barracks' court,
And passed out from its door.

To-day more soldiers went away,
With flowers on their caps,
In warm gray coats and polished boots
And shining knapsack straps.

With holy water came the priest
To bless them from on high,
And friends and relatives were there
To say to them good-by.

But when all should in chorus sing
A song of the Fatherland,
Friends, relatives, and soldiers sobbed
To the music of the band.

It is not true that thinking men
Are glad to fight and die,
Except they clearly understand
A righteous reason why.

And so, in the barracks' court to-day,
The music played alone,
And tears enough were shed to melt
A hundred hearts of stone.

MUNICH, November 4, 1914.

MID-NOVEMBER

The town is like a fairy realm,
Now winter has begun.
With silver, gold, and diamonds,
Its roofs gleam in the sun.

It would be pleasant to be here,
Mid the forests black and white,
If for a day I might forget
This European fight.

But, in the quiet of the morn,
I hear a cannon peal,
And know a soldier's mass is said
While the people praying kneel.

And when I go outside, I meet
Men walking two by two,
Accompanied by soldier guards
In coats of red and blue.

The men wear yellow bands tied round
Their arms, which indicate
That to be prisoners of war
Is their unhappy fate.

I pass young women wearing crêpe —
The badge of grief and loss —
And a schoolboy with a black sleeve band
Embroidered with a cross.

On either side St. Oswald's church,
And in the tree-set square,
I see the peasants round the booths
Of the mid-November fair.

And wounded soldiers, too, are there,
All dressed in gray and red.
Some lean on canes, some carry slings;
One has a bandaged head.

That one who walks, as he is led,
By the hand of a neighbor kind,
Home from the battle front has come
Irreparably blind.

The latest war post picture cards
That hang to right and left,
Show dying men and heroes' graves,
And wives and maids bereft.

And now grandfathers shake their heads
Above the lists of the dead,
And mothers tremble when the report
Of a victory is read.

And many question in their hearts,
If to speak out they fear,
What fate is waiting at the end
For them and their country dear.

TRAUNSTEIN, 1914.

MID-DECEMBER

A mild December's here to help
The needy on their way;
The sun, the sun, the blessed sun,
Shines warmly every day!

War prisoners, who build a road,
Pass the villa garden gate,
With easy step and cheerful talk,
As St. Oswald's clock strikes eight.

The sun shines on the hospital,
And makes the wounded glad.
It gives them back the heart and hope
That as recruits they had.

It brightens up the iron cross
That hangs on the breast of one,
Who, for the love of Fatherland,
A valiant deed has done.

A sunbeam gilds the crucifix
That hangs on the workroom wall,
Where the girls of the convent school wind yarn,
One gray ball after ball.

Instead of making Christmas gifts
For friends, as is their wont,
They all are knitting scarfs and socks
For soldiers at the front.

And, as they knit, they sadly speak
Of Sister Anna's fate,
The Irish teacher, who is now
Forbidden by the State.

"What harm could Sister Anna do,"
Is the question they repeat,
"In her cloister veil, with her Irish eyes,
And her Irish smile so sweet?"

The questions deep in Anna's heart
Would be too sad to say,
So she lets the sun dry up her tears,
As convent sisters may.

And now at noon, on squares and shops,
In the centre of the town,
With thawing warmth and splendent light,
The blessed sun looks down.

It sees, in every window piled,
Post packets, small and great;
Some hold cigars, and some liqueurs,
Or fruit and chocolate.

And now no more in newspapers
May we the death list read;
Instead the columns long are filled
With talk of soldiers' need.

And so for Christmas in the field
Good folk contribute now,
While there's only one in the town to think
Of prisoners in the Au.

TRAUNSTEIN, 1914.

MID-JANUARY

The sleet blows wild above the hills,
But rain falls in the town.
The mountain tops are changeless white,
But with mud the streets are brown.

The Christmas tree is in the yard.
It leans against the shed.
Where Christmas Eve the candles shone
The raindrops shine instead.

And now that we have eaten all
The toothsome Christmas cake,
The *Ministerium* says it was
A shame so much to bake,

And that all black bread must contain
So much potato meal.
Frugality's the virtue which
Ensures the country's weal.

Benevolence to the bereaved
Is also widely taught;
And still we read that gold must to
The empire's bank be brought.

And where in August days we found
Exultant martial rhymes,
Are printed now pathetic lays
Of these iron-hearted times.

To save lamp oil, by candle light
We read the war reports.
The night grows cold, and the morrow brings
Fresh snow and winter sports.

But the older boys who skied and slid
In mid-November's cold
Are now, as mustering recruits,
In Munich town enrolled.

I heard their high-pitched farewell cries
Through the rain of yesterday,
As the early morning Munich train
Pulled from the town away.

They go to take the place of men
Who have perished in the war,
And now the town must workers from
The foreign captives draw.

While soldiers with bright bayonets
Walk sluggish up and down,
The hapless Poles destroy a dam
By the swiftly flowing Traun.

They wheel the barrows back and forth,
Through mud or snow and ice.
To be prisoner and penniless
Is certainly not nice.

But 'tis less sad for me to see
Their coats so worn and thin,
Because I know that all now wear
Warm clothing next the skin.

In a shop window near the square
War spoils their story tell,
And a Frenchman's gaiters, cap, and sword
Make battles seem more real.

TRAUNSTEIN, 1915

MID-FEBRUARY

In pearls and lace and filigree,
  On hedges, roofs, and trees,
Now February's silver fogs
  In dreamy beauty freeze.

The little birds already know
  That spring is coming soon.
I hear them chirping cheerfully
  As the sun shines warm at noon.

The little birds find only joy
  In the lengthening of the days.
They have no fear of deeper plots
  And wilder war affrays.

They do not weep and pray for men
  In peril on the sea.
For news from boys in trenches cold,
  They wait not anxiously.

And when the flags are all displayed,
  And bells in triumph ring,
The little birds are unconcerned;
  They do not louder sing.

Oh, how I bless the little birds,
  The little winter birds!
In Nature's order I find hope
  That's far beyond my words.

TRAUNSTEIN, 1915

MY CROSS OF SALT

A soldier in the prison guard
Brought me a cross to-day,
That he from salt had carved with care
To wile the hours away.

I think it will not last so long
As a cross of iron tough;
But I find it more to my conceit
Than one of harder stuff.

It minds me of the bitter tears
That in these times fall fast,
And of the goodness in the world
That must prevail at last.

An iron cross the Kaiser gives
To those he would exalt.
A soldier gave to me to-day
A cross carved out of salt.

March 7, 1915.

MID-MARCH

Sweet flowers, yellow, red, and white,
Blow by the river-side,
While blossomed pink primroses are
The town seed merchant's pride.

I know that Easter's almost here
By the nests from paper made,
And the sugar eggs and chocolate hares
In baker's shops displayed.

Such simple sights from thoughts of war
Bring momentary rest,
And then my heart turns sick to see
Two hares as soldiers dressed.

In a shop window stands a girl
In first communion gown,
And there's a hat with Hindenburg
On the band around its crown.

And everything is very dear,
The worried people say;
But by the clothiers men's attire
Is almost given away.

On Max Platz now, the town war list
Shows many fallen dead.
I count the names of forty-six
Inscribed with crosses red.

And still the wounded soldiers walk
About the streets in pairs,
And captive men play chess and cards,
Forgetting thus their cares.

The war is long, say free and bound,
With feeling deep and strong;
In letters from the front I read,
The war, it is so long.

TRAUNSTEIN, 1915.

MID-APRIL

With dark gray clouds and chilly winds,
And mud and drizzling rain,
And creeping fogs and driving hail,
The winter's back again.

The cold, dark evenings are unkind,
With wood and oil so dear,
My spirit fails to think of all
The misery so near.

But fair hope's tender colors gleam
Beneath a film of snow,
And sunny, golden daffodils
Bloom bravely in a row.

And hate is soft with sympathy.
Toward friendship is the trend.
It was a blunder, people say,
The war — it must soon end.

TRAUNSTEIN, 1915.

MID-MAY

The Munich parks are pretty, now
That May makes all things new,
And people sit or walk about
As they are wont to do.

But mid gay songs and fragrant scents
They say with discontent,
This lovely weather does not fit
A world with sorrow rent.

And for her love of Italy,
That artist girl in white
Has sobbing lain awake, throughout
The hours of a night.

The papers say the town is pleased
The Lusitania's lost;
But friendly greetings are as dull
As flowers touched by frost.

And a girl from Bregenz dares to say,
"The German Kaiser's mad;
That my country did not do the deed
I'm very, very glad."

And oh, that longing deep for peace!
And oh, that question, Why?
One can do nothing, is the phrase
That's ended with a sigh.

MUNICH, 1915.

Not so much honoring the brave,
As in the hope that I might show
What a sad and terrible thing it is
When good men meet as foe to foe.

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